A RESOLUTION Of ſome CASES OF CONSCIENCE Which reſpect Church-Communion.

VIZ.

I. Whether to Communicate with ſome Church, eſpecially in ſuch a divided State of the Church, be a neceſſary Duty, Incumbent on all Chriſtians.

II. Whether Conſtant Communion be a neceſſary Duty, where Occaſional Communion is Lawful.

III. Whether it be Lawful to Communicate with two Churches, which are in a State of Separation from each other.

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IN order to ſtate ſuch Caſes as particularly relate to Church-Communion with all poſſible clearneſs, it will be neceſſary to premiſe a brief explication of ſome words, which muſt be uſed in queſtions of this nature, but are not ſo commonly underſtood.

As, 1. What is meant by a Church, and a Chriſtian Church.
2. What Church-Communion is.
3. What is meat by Fix't Communion and by Occaſional Communion.

Firſt, What is meant by a Church. Now the plaineſt deſcription I can give of a Church is this, *That the Church is a Body or Society of Men ſeparated from the reſt of the World, and united to God, and to themſelves, by a Divine Covenant.* I ſhall briefly explain this deſcription, to fit it to the meaneſt underſtanding.

1. Then, a Church is a Body or Society of Men, for I ſpeak onely of the Church in this World, and therefore ſhall not enter into that diſpute, in what ſenſe Angels belong to the Church.

And when I call the Church a *Body* or *Society* of Men, I oppoſe a *Body* to ſingle *Individuals*, or particular Men, and to *a confuſed Multitude*, without any Order or Union among themſelves. For though the Church conſiſts of particular Men, and when their Numbers are encreaſed, of great Multitudes, yet the Church con-

ſiſts of ſuch particular Men, not conſidered in a private and ſeparate capacity, but as United into a regular Society, wich is called a *Body*, in alluſion to the natural Body, in which all the parts and members are United in an exact Order, *Eph.* 4. 16. 1 *Cor.* 12. 15, 16, &c. *For God is not the Author of Confuſion, but of Peace, as in all the Churches of the Saints.* And if the meaneſt Societies cannot ſubſiſt without Order, wherein their ſtrength and beauty and uſefulneſs conſiſt, much leſs the Church of God, which is a Society Inſtituted for the moſt ſpiritual and ſupernatural Ends.

And therefore we find, that God ordained a moſt exact Order and Government in the Jewiſh Church, which for the greater ſtrength and Unity he formed into a Religious Commonwealth: And our Bleſſed Saviour ordained the Apoſtles, and committed the Government of his Church to them, and their Succeſſors, with a promiſe *to be with them to the end of the World.* And the Chriſtian Church, with reſpect to the firm and cloſe Union and orderly Diſpoſition of all its Parts, is not onely called a Body, but a *Spiritual Building*, and *Holy Temple*, and *the Houſe of God.*

Eph. 2. 21, 22.
1 Tim. 3. 15.

But then the Church is a Body, or *one* Body, in oppoſition to many Bodies; for Chriſt has but one Body, and one Church, and he is the Saviour of this Body. The Jewiſh Church was but one, and therefore the Chriſtian Church is but one; which is not a new diſtinct Church, but is grafted into the Jewiſh ſtock or root. Believing Jews and Chriſtians being United into one Church, *built upon the foundation of the Apoſtles and Prophets, Jeſus Chriſt himſelf being the chief corner-ſtone:* Who Unites Jews and Gentiles into one Church, as the corner-ſtone unites both ſides of the Houſe, and holds them together.

Rom. 11. 17, 18.

Upon the ſame account the Church is called the *Building*, the *Houſe*, the *Temple* of God; and we know the Temple was but one, and was to be but one, by the expreſs command and Inſtitution of God. And for the ſame reaſon Chriſt tells us, that there ſhould be but *one Fold under one Shepherd.*

John 10. 16.

And indeed it is extreamly abſurd and unreaſonable to ſay, that the Chriſtian Church, which is built upon the ſame foundation, which worſhips the ſame God and Saviour, which profeſſes the ſame Faith, are Heirs to the ſame promiſes, and enjoy all priviledges in common, ſhould be divided into as diſtinct and ſeparate Bodies, though of the ſame kind and nature, as *Peter*, *James*, and *John*, are diſtinct Perſons, though they partake of the ſame com-

common nature. That is, it is very abſurd to ſay, that where every thing is common, there is not one Community. *Peter*, and *James*, and *John*, though they partake of the ſame common nature, yet each of them have a diſtinct eſſence and ſubſiſtence of their own (as it muſt be in natural Beings, otherwiſe there could be but one Man in the World) and this makes them diſtinct perſons. But where the very nature and eſſence of a Body or Society conſiſts in having all things common, there can be but one Body; and therefore if *one Lord, one Faith, one Baptiſm, one God and Father of all*, be common to the whole Chriſtian Church; if there be no peculiar Priviledges, which belong to ſome Chriſtians and and not to all, to one part of the Church, and not to another; then by the Inſtitution of Chriſt, there is but one Church, one Body, one Communion, one Houſhold and Family: For where there is nothing to Diſtinguiſh and Separate, no Encloſures or Partitions of Divine Appointment, there can be, by Divine Inſtitution, but one Body.

2. I adde, that the Church is a Body or Society of Men ſeparated from the reſt of the World, or called out of the World, as ἐκκλησία, from whence *Eccleſia* is derived, may ſignifie, and is ſo expounded by many Divines, upon which account the Chriſtians are ſo often called, the κλητοὶ, and ἐκλεκτοὶ, the Called and Choſen, or Elect People of God; which ſignifies, that the Church is diſtinguiſhed from the reſt of the World by a peculiar and appropriate Faith, by peculiar Laws, by peculiar Rites of Worſhip, and peculiar Promiſes and Priviledges, which are not common to the whole World, but onely to thoſe, who are received into the Communion of the Church. But there is no controverſie about this matter, and therefore I need adde no more about it.

3. The Church is a Body of Men united to God and to themſelves by a Divine Covenant. The Church is united to God, for it is a Religious Society, inſtituted for the Worſhip of God; and they are united among themſelves, and to each other, becauſe it is but one Body, which requires a union of all its parts, as I have already ſhewed, and ſhall diſcourſe more preſently. But the chief thing to be obſerved here, is this, that this union with God, and to each other, which conſtitutes a Church, is made by *a Divine Covenant*. Thus it was in the Jewiſh Church, God entered into Covenant with *Abraham*, and choſe him and his Poſterity for his Church and Peculiar People, and gave him Circumciſion for a

Sign

Sign and Seal of this Covenant. And under the Gospel God hath made a new Covenant with mankind; in and by his Son Jesus Christ, who is *the Mediator of a Better Covenant, founded upon better Promises*; and this Gospel-Covenant is the foundation of the Christian Church. For the Christian Church is nothing else, but such a Society of Men, as is in Covenant with God through Christ.

I suppose all men will grant, that God onely can make or constitute a Church. For such persons, if there were any so absurd, are not worth disputing with, who dare affirm the Church to be a humane Creature, or the invention of Men.

And I think it is as plain, that the onely visible way God has of forming a Church, (for I do not now speak of the invisible operations of the Divine Spirit) is by granting a Church-Covenant, which is the Divine Charter whereon the Church is founded, and investing some persons with Power and Authority to receive others into this Covenant, according to the terms and conditions of the Covenant, and by such Covenant-Rites and Forms of Admission, as he is pleased to institute; which under the Gospel is Baptism, as under the Law it was Circumcision.

To be taken into Covenant with God, and to be received into the Church, is the very same thing. For the Church is a Society of Men, who are in Covenant with God. That can be no Church which is not in Covenant with God; he is no Member of the Church, who is not at least visibly admitted into Gods Covenant; and whoever is in Covenant with God, is made a member of the Church, by being admitted into Covenant.

Now before I proceed, I shall briefly observe some few things, which are so plain and evident, if these Principles be true, that I need onely name them; and yet are of great use for the resolution of some following cases.

As 1. That a Covenant-state and Church-state is the same thing.

2. That every profest Christian, who is received into Covenant, as such, is a Church-member.

3. That nothing else is necessary to make us members of the Christian Church but only Baptism, which is the Sacrament of our admission into the Christian-Covenant. For if Baptism, which gives us right to all the Priviledges of the Covenant, does not make us Church-members, then a Church-state is no part of the Cove-

Covenant; then a man may be in Covenant with God through Christ, and yet be no member of Christ; or he may be a member of Christ, and no member of his Body, which is the Church.

4. That no Church-state can depend upon humane Contracts and Covenants, for then a Church would be a humane Creature, and a humane Constitution; whereas a Church can be founded onely upon a Divine Covenant. It is true, no man who is at age, can be admitted to Baptism till he profess his Faith in Christ, and voluntarily undertake the Baptismal Vow; but the Independent Church-Covenant betwixt Pastor and People, is of a very different Nature from this, unless any man will say, that the voluntary contract and Covenant, which the Independents exact from their members, and wherein they place a Church-state, be part of the Baptismal Vow. If it be not, then they found the Church upon a humane Covenant, for Christ hath made but one Covenant with Mankind, which is contained in the Vow of Baptism: If it be, then no Man is a Christian but an Independent, and then they would do well to shew, how the Baptismal Vow, which is but one and the same for all Mankind, determines one Man to be a first member of Dr. *Owen* Church, another of Mr. *Griffith*, or any other Independent Pastors; and if they could get over this difficulty, there is another still, why they exact this Church-Covenant of Baptized Christians, before they will admit them to their Communion, if Baptism makes them members of their Church.

This I think makes it plain, that the Independent Church-Covenant is no part of the Baptismal Vow, and then it is no part of the Christian Covenant; and if there be no true Church-state, but what depends on such humane Contracts, then the Church owes its being to the will of Men, not to the Covenant of God.

5. I observe further, how absurd it is to gather Churches out of Churches which already consist of Baptized Christians. Christianity indeed separates us from the rest of the World, but surely it does not separate Christians from each other. The Apostles onely undertook to Convert Jews and Heathens to the Christian Faith, and to make them members of the Christian Church, which is a state of Separation from the World; but these men convert Christians from common Christianity, and the Communion of the Universal Church, to Independency. If

the

the Church be founded on a Divine Covenant, we know no Church but what all Chriſtians are made members of by Baptiſm, which is the Univerſal Church, the one Body and Spouſe of Chriſt. And to argue from the Apoſtles gathering Churches from among Jews and Heathens, to prove the gathering Churches out of a Chriſtian and National Church, muſt either conclude, that a Church and Church-ſtate is a very indifferent and Arbitrary thing, and that Men may be very good Chriſtians, and in a ſafe condition without it; or that Baptized Chriſtians, who are not members of a particular Independent Church, are no better than Jews and Heathens; that is, that Baptiſm it ſelf, though a Divine Sacrament and Seal of the Covenant, is of no value, till it be confirmed and ratified by a humane Independent Covenant.

6. I obſerve, that if the Chriſtian Church be founded on a Divine Covenant, on that new Covenant which God hath made with Mankind in Chriſt, then there is but one Church of which all Chriſtians are members, as there is but one Covenant into which we are all admitted by Baptiſm. For the Church and the Covenant muſt be of an equal extent. There can be but one Church founded upon one Covenant; and all who have an intereſt in the ſame Covenant, are members of the ſame Church.

And therefore, though the diſtance of place, and the neceſſities and conveniencies of Worſhip and Diſcipline, may, and has divided the Church into ſeveral parts and members, and particular Churches, yet the Church cannot be divided into two or more diſtinct and ſeparate Churches; for that deſtroys the unity of the Church: And unleſs they could divide the Covenant alſo, two Churches, which are not members of each other, cannot partake in the ſame Covenant, but the guilty Divider forfeits his intereſt in the Covenant without a new grant.

A Prince indeed may grant the ſame Charter to ſeveral diſtinct Cities and Corporations; but then, though the matter of the Charter be the ſame, their right to it depends upon diſtinct grants. But if he grant a Charter for the erecting of ſuch a Corporation, and confine his Charter to the members of that Corporation, thoſe who wilfully ſeparate themſelves from this Corporation to which this Charter was granted, forfeit their intereſt in the Charter, and muſt not think to erect a new diſtinct Corporation by the ſame Charter.

Thus

Thus it is here: God hath made a Covenant of grace with Mankind in Christ, and declares that by this one Covenant, he unites all the Disciples of Christ into one Body and Christian Church, who shall all partake of the Blessings of this Covenant. By Baptism we are all received into this Covenant, and admitted members of this one Church. Now while we continue in the Unity of this Body, it is evident that we have a right to all the Blessings of the Covenant, which are promised to this Body, and to every member of it. But if we divide our selves from this Body, and set up distinct and separate Societies, which we call Churches, but which are not members, nor live in Communion with the one Catholick Church, we cannot carry our Right and Title to the Covenant out of the Church with us.

The Gospel-Covenant is the common Charter of the Christian Church, and if we are not contented to enjoy these Blessings in common with other Christians, we must be contented to go without them. For it is not a particular Covenant, which God makes with particular separate Churches, but a general Covenant made with the whole Body of Christians, as United in one Communion; and therefore that, which no particular Church has any interest in, but as it is a member of the universal Church.

God hath not made any Covenant in particular with the Church of *Geneva*, of *France* or *England*, but with the one Body and Church of Christ all the World over; and therefore the onely thing that can give us in particular a right to the Blessings of the Covenant, is, that we observe the conditions of this Covenant, and live in Unity and Communion with all true Christian Churches in the World, which makes us members of the Catholick Church, to whom the Promises are made.

Secondly, The next thing to be explained is, what is meant by Church-Communion. Now Church-Communion signifies no more than Church-Fellowship and Society, and to be in Communion with the Church, is to be a member of the Church; and this is called Communion, because all Church-members have a common right to Church-Priviledges, and a common Obligation to all those Duties and Offices which a Church-relation Exacts from them.

I know this word *Communion* is commonly used to signifie a personal and presential Communion in Religious Offices: as when Men pray, and hear, and receive the Sacrament of the Lords Sup-

per together, they are ſaid to be in Communion with one another, and to live in Communion with that Church with which they joyn in all Acts of Worſhip.

Now we muſt acknowledge, that Publick Acts of Worſhip performed in the Communion of the Church, are an Exerciſe of Chriſtian Communion: but Church-Communion is ſomething antecedent to all the Acts and Offices of Communion. For no man has a right to any Act of Chriſtian Communion, but he who is in a ſtate of Communion with the Chriſtian Church.

What natural Union is in natural Bodies, that Communion is in Bodies Politick, whether civil or religious Societies; a member *muſt be vitally united to the Body, before it can perform any natural Action or Office of a member, before the Eye can ſee, or the Feet can walk, or the Ears can hear*; and the union of the Eye, or Foot, to the Body, does not conſiſt in ſeeing or walking, but ſeeing and walking are the effects of this union.

Thus in a Body Politick, when men by any common Charter are united into one Society, they become one common body, or one Communion; and this gives them right to all the priviledges of that Body, and obliges them to all the Duties and Offices which their Charter requires of them. But ſhould any man, who is not regularly admitted into this Society, pretend to the ſame priviledges, or do ſuch things as are required of thoſe who are members of this Body, this would be ſo far from being thought an Act of Communion with them, that it would be cenſured as an unjuſt Uſurpation. Should a man, who is no Citizen of *London*, open his ſhop, and drive a trade as other Citizens do, or give his Vote at a Common-Hall, and in all other caſes act like a Citizen, this would not make him a Citizen, but an Intruder. He is a forreigner ſtill, and his preſuming to act like a Citizen, when he is none, is no act of Communion with that Body, of which he is no member, but juſtly expoſes him to cenſure and puniſhment.

Thus it is in the Chriſtian Church, which is one Body and Society united by a Divine Covenant. Our Communion with the Church conſiſts in being members of the Church, which we are made by Baptiſm: The exerciſe of this Communion conſiſts in all thoſe Offices and Duties which all the members of the Church are obliged to, and which none have any right to perform, but they; ſuch as praying and receiving the Lords Supper together, *&c.*

Now

Now ſhould any man who is no member of the Church, nor owns himſelf to be ſo, intrude into the Church, and Communicate in all holy Offices, this can be no more called an Act of Communion, than it can be ſaid to make him a member of the Church of which he is no member, and reſolved not to be. Prayers, and receiving the Sacraments, *&c.* are Acts of Communion, when performed by Church-members in the Communion of the Church; but they are no Acts of Communion, when performed by thoſe who are no Church-members, though to ſerve a turn, they thruſt themſelves into the Society of the Church.

As for inſtance, ſuppoſe a member of a Presbyterian or Independant Conventicle, ſhould, for reaſons beſt known to himſelf, at ſome critical time, come to his Pariſh-Church, and there hear the Common-Prayer and Sermon, and receive the Lords Supper, according to the order of the Church of *England*, does this make this man a member of the Church of *England*, with which he never Communicated before, and it is likely, will never do again? If it does not, all this is no Act of Communion, which can be only between the members of the ſame Body.

So that to be in Church-Communion, does not ſignifie meerly to perform ſome ſuch Acts, which are Acts of Communion in the members of the Church, but ſince the decay of Church-Diſcipline, may ſometimes be performed by thoſe who are not members; which is ſuch an abuſe, as would not have been allowed in the Primitive Church, who denyed their Communion to Schiſmaticks, as well as to the Excommunicate upon other accounts: But to be in Church-Communion, ſignifies to be a member of the Church, to be Embodyed and Incorporated with it; and I ſuppoſe, what that means, every one knows who underſtands what it is to be a member of any Society, of a City, or any inferiour Corporation; which conſiſts of Priviledge and Duty, and requires all thoſe, who will enjoy the benefits of ſuch a Society, to diſcharge their reſpective truſts and obligations.

To be in Communion with, or to be a member of the Church, includes a Right and Title to all thoſe Bleſſings which God hath promiſed to his Church, and an obligation to all the Duties and Offices of Church-Society; as Subjection to the Authority, Inſtructions, Cenſures of the Church; a Communion in Prayers and Sacraments, and other Religious Offices: And he who deſpiſes the Authority, or deſtroys the Unity of the Church, re-

nounces his membership and Communion with it. These things are extreamly plain; and though men may cavil for disputes sake, yet must needs convince them, that no man is in Communion with a Church, which he is not a member of, though through the defect of Discipline, he should sometimes be admitted to some Act of Communion with it; and I shall observe some few things from hence of great use.

1. That Church-Communion primarily and principally respects the universal Church; not any particular Church or Society of Christians. For to be in Church-Communion, signifies to be a member of the Church, or Body of Christ, which is but one all the World over. Church-Communion does not consist in particular Acts of Communion, which can be performed only among those who are present, and neighbours to each other, but in membership: Now a member is a member of the whole body, (not meerly of any part of it) how large soever the body be. All the Subjects of *England*, those who live at St. *Davids*, and those at *Yarmouth*, who never saw nor conversed with each other, are all members of the same Kingdom; and by the same reason, this membership may extend to the remotest part of the world, if the Body, whereof we are members, reach so far.

And therefore we may observe, that Baptism, which is the Sacrament of our Admission into the Covenant of God, and the Communion of the Church, does not make us members of any particular Church, as such, but of the universal Church. And I observed before, that a Church-state, which is the same thing with Church-Communion, is founded onely on a Divine Covenant; and therefore since there is no other Divine Covenant to make us members of particular Churches, as distinguisht from the Universal Church, such particular Church-membership is at best but a humane Invention, and indeed nothing else but a Schism from the Universal Church: which alone, if well considered, is a sufficient confutation of Independency, which is a particular Church-state, as distinguisht from all other Churches and Societies of Christians.

2. I observe further, that though the exercise of Church-Communion, as to most of the particular Duties and Offices of it, must be confined to a particular Church and Congregation (for we cannot actually joyn in the Communion of Prayers and Sacraments, *&c.* but with some particular Church) yet every Act of Chri-

Chriſtian Communion, though performed in ſome particular Church, is and muſt be an Act of Communion with the whole Catholick Church. Praying, and Hearing, and receiving the Lords Supper together, does not make us more in Communion with the Church of *England*, than with any other true and Orthodox part of the Church, though in the remoteſt parts of the World. The exerciſe of true Chriſtian Communion in a particular Church, is nothing elſe but the exerciſe of Catholick Communion in a particular Church; which the neceſſity of affairs requires, ſince all the Chriſtians in the World cannot meet together for Acts of Worſhip: But there is nothing in all theſe Acts of Communion which does more peculiarly unite us to ſuch a particular Church, than to the whole Chriſtian Church.

When we pray together to God, we pray to him as the common Father of all Chriſtians, and do not challenge any peculiar intereſt in him, as members of ſuch a particular Church, but as members of the whole Body of Chriſt. When we pray in the Name of Chriſt, we conſider him as the great High Prieſt, and Saviour of the Body, who powerfully intercedes for the whole Church, and for us as members of the Univerſal Church. And we offer up our Prayers and Thankſgiving, not onely for our ſelves and thoſe who are preſent, but for all Chriſtians all the World over, as our fellow-members: and praying for one another is the trueſt notion of Communion of Prayers; for praying with one another, is onely in order to praying for one another. And thus our Prayers are an exerciſe of Chriſtian-Communion, when we pray to the ſame common Father, through the Merits and Mediation of the ſame common Saviour and Redeemer, for the ſame common Bleſſings, for our ſelves, and the whole Chriſtian Church.

Thus when we meet together to celebrate the Supper of our Lord, we do not meet as at a private Supper, but as at the common Feaſt of Chriſtians: and therefore it is not an Act of particular Church-fellowſhip, but of Catholick Communion. The Supper of our Lord does not ſignifie any other kind of union and confederation between thoſe Neighbour-Chriſtians who receive together in the ſame Church, than with the whole Body of Chriſt. The Sacramental Bread ſignifies and repreſents all thoſe for whom Chriſt died, that one Myſtical Body, for which he offered his Natural Body, which is the Univerſal Church; and our eating of this

this Bread, ſignifies our union to this Body of Chriſt; and therefore is conſidered as an Act of true Catholick, not of a particular Church-Communion. And the Sacramental Cup is the Blood of the New Teſtament, and therefore repreſents our Communion in all the Bleſſings of the Covenant, and with all thoſe who are thus in Covenant with God. So that there is nothing particular in this Feaſt, to make it a private Feaſt, or an Act of Communion with a particular Church, conſidered as particular; but it is the common Feaſt of Chriſtians, and an Act of Catholick Communion.

Which by the way plainly ſhews, how groundleſs that ſcruple is againſt mixt Communions, that men think themſelves defiled by receiving the Lords Supper with men who are vicious. For though it is a great defect in Diſcipline, and a great reproach to the Chriſtian Profeſſion, when wicked men are not cenſured, and removed from Chriſtian Communion, yet they may as well pretend that their Communion is defiled by bad men, who Communicate in any other part of the Church, or any other Congregation, as in that in which they live and Communicate: For this holy Feaſt ſignifies no other Communion between them, who receive at the ſame time, and in the ſame company, than it does with all ſincere parts of the Chriſtian Church. It is not a Communion with any perſons conſidered as preſent, but it is a Communion with the Body of Chriſt and all true members of it, whether preſent or abſent.

Thoſe who ſeparate from a national Church for the ſake of corrupt profeſſors, though they could form a Society as pure and holy as they ſeem to deſire, yet are Schiſmaticks in it, becauſe they confine their Communion to their own ſelect Company, and exclude the whole Body of Chriſtians all the World over, out of it: their Communion is no larger than their gathered Church; for if it be, then they muſt ſtill Communicate with thoſe Churches which have corrupt members, as all viſible Churches on earth have, (unleſs we will except Independents, becauſe they have the confidence to except themſelves) and then their Separation does not anſwer its end, which is to avoid ſuch corrupt Communions: and yet if they do confine their Communion to their own gathered Churches, they are Schiſmaticks in dividing themſelves from the Body of Chriſtians; and all their Prayers and Sacraments are not Acts of Chriſtian Communion, but a Schiſmatical Combination.

This

This does not prove indeed, that particular Churches are not bound to reform themſelves, and to preſerve their own Communion pure from corrupt members, unleſs all the Churches in the World will do ſo too; becauſe every particular Church, whether Dioceſan, or National, has power to reform its own members, and is accountable to God for ſuch neglects of Diſcipline: but it does prove, that no Church without the guilt of Schiſm, can renounce Communion with other Chriſtian Churches, or ſet up a diſtinct and ſeparate Communion of its own, for the ſake of ſuch corrupt members: which was the pretence of the *Novatian* and *Donatiſt* Schiſm of Old, and is ſo of the Independent Schiſm at this day.

3. I obſerve further, that our obligation to maintain Communion with a particular Church, wholly reſults from our obligation to Catholick Communion. The onely reaſon why I am bound to live in Communion with any particular Church, is becauſe I am a member of the whole Chriſtian Church, which is the Body of Chriſt, and therefore muſt live in Communion with the Chriſtian Church; and yet it is impoſſible to live in Communion with the whole Chriſtian Church, without actual Communion with ſome part of it, when I am in ſuch a place where there is a viſible Chriſtian Church; as no member can be United to the Natural Body, without its being United to ſome part of the Body, for the Union and Communion of the whole Body conſiſts in the Union of all its parts to each other.

Every Act of Chriſtian Communion, though performed in a particular Church, or Congregation, is not properly an Act of particular Church-Communion, but is the exerciſe of Communion with the whole Church and Body of Chriſt, as I have already proved: but it can be no Act of Communion at all, if it be not performed in the Communion of the Church; which it cannot be, unleſs it be performed in the Communion of ſome particular Church. And this is the onely obligation I know of, to Communion with any particular Church, that as I am a Chriſtian, I am a member of the Body and Church of Chriſt, and in a State of Communion, and therefore am bound to maintain actual Communion with the Chriſtian Church, where-ever I find it; and by Communicating with the Church wherein I live, if it be a Sound and Orthodox Member of the Chriſtian Church, I maintain Communion with the whole Catholick Church, which is but one Body.

So

So that here is no choice what Church we will Communicate with, for there is but one Church all the World over, with which we muſt Communicate; and therefore we have nothing elſe to do, but to judge whether that part of the Church wherein we live, be ſo Sound and Orthodox, that we may Communicate with it according to the Principles of Catholick Communion; and if it be, we are bound to Communicate with it, under peril of Schiſm from the Catholick Church if we do not.

4. From hence we may plainly learn the true notion of a Separate Communion, and Separate Church. For ſome men ſeem to be greatly ſenſible of the ſin and miſchief of Schiſm and Separation, but then they uſe great art ſo to confound the notion of Separation, as that neither they themſelves, nor any one elſe ſhall ever be able to underſtand what it is; whereas if they will allow, that there is, or ever can be, any ſuch thing as Separation from the Church, it is as eaſie to underſtand what Separation is, as what it is for a member to be divided from the Body.

For if there be but one Church, and one Communion, of which all true Chriſtians, and Chriſtian Churches, are, or ought to be members, then thoſe Churches, which are not members of each other, are Separate Churches. It is not enough indeed to prove a Separation, that two Congregations meet in ſeveral places for Worſhip, for this is done by all the Pariſh-Churches of *England*, who are in the ſame Communion, but yet hold diſtinct and Separate Aſſemblies, as to Local Separation. Nor is it ſufficient to prove that there is no Separation, becauſe theſe differing Churches agree in all the Articles of Faith, and eſſentials of worſhip: For thus the *Novatians* and *Donatiſts* did, who yet were Schiſmaticks from the Catholick Church. But where there are two Churches, which are not members of each other, there is a Schiſm, though they agree in every thing elſe, but in one Communion; and where Churches own each others Communion, as members of the ſame Body, there is no Schiſm, though they are as diſtant from each other in place, as Eaſt and Weſt.

And it is as eaſie to underſtand what it is for two Churches to be members of each other: but to make this as plain as I can, and as far as it is poſſible to prevent all Evaſions and Subterfuges, I ſhall lay down ſome few Rules according to the Principles of Catholick Communion, whereby we may certainly know, what Churches

Churches are in Communion with each other, and which are Separate and Schismatical Conventicles.

1. There must be but one Church, in one place, according to that ancient Rule of the Catholick Church, that there must be but one Bishop in a City; and this was observed in the Apostolical times, that in the greatest and most populous Cities, and where there were the greatest number of Converts, yet there was but one Church, such as *Jerusalem*, *Antioch*, *Ephesus*, &c. This is acknowledged by the Independents themselves, who endeavour hence to prove, that there were no more Christians in any of those Cities, than could meet together in one place for Acts of Worship; which is a mighty groundless surmise, and not much for the credit of the Christian Church, as has been often shewn by learned men, both Episcopal and Presbyterian Divines.

And there is an evident reason why this should be so, because there is no other Rule of Catholick Communion for private Christians, but to Communicate in all religious Offices, and all Acts of Government and Discipline, with those Christians with whom they live: for to renounce the ordinary Communion of any Christians or true Christian Church, is to divide the Unity and Communion of the Church; and to withdraw our selves from ordinary Communion with the Church in which we live, into distinct and separate Societies for Worship, is to renounce their Communion; and when there is not a necessary cause for it, is a Schismatical Separation.

So that distinct and particular Churches, which are in Communion with each other, must have their distinct bounds and limits, as every member has its natural and proper place and situation in the body. But when there is one Church within the Bowels of another, a new Church gathered out of a Church already constituted, and formed into a distinct and separate Society, this divides Christian Communion, and is a notorious Schism. These Churches cannot be members of each other, because they ought to be but one Church; and therefore to form and gather a new Church, is to divide and separate the members of the same Church from each other.

This is the plain Case of the Presbyterian and Independent Churches, and those other Conventicles of Sectaries, which are among us; they are Churches in a Church, Churches formed out of the National Church; by which means Christians who

live together, refuse to Worship God in the same Assemblies; and have bitter envyings and contentions for the honour and purity of their several Churches.

If all Christians are members of the one Body of Christ, nothing can justifie the distinction of Christians into several Churches, but onely such a distance of place, as makes it necessary and expedient to put them under the Conduct and Government of several Bishops, for the greater Edification of the Church, in the more easie and regular Administration of Discipline, and all holy Offices; and therefore nothing can justifie the gathering of a Church out of a Christian Church, and dividing neighbour-Christians into distinct Communions.

Churches at a distance may be distinct Churches under their distinct Bishops, but yet in the same Communion; but distinct Churches in the same place can never be of the same Communion, for then they would naturally Unite and Cement into one. There must either be Antibishops, or Schismatical Presbyters, set up in opposition to their Bishops, under different and opposite Rules of Worship and Discipline; which makes them rival and oppofite Churches, not members of each other. From hence I think it plainly appears, that all Separation from a Church wherein we live, unless there be necessary reasons for it, is Schism; and we cannot justifie such distinct Churches within one another, from the examples of other distinct Churches, whose bounds, and limits, and jurisdiction also, are distinct and separate.

2. It is plain those are Separate Churches, which divide from the Communion of any Church, from any dislike of its Doctrine, Government, or Worship; for in this case, it is plain they leave the Church, and form themselves into a new Church, out of the Communion of the Church from whence they went, because they did not think it safe to continue one Body with it.

This has often made me wonder, what these men mean, who take all occasions to quarrel at our Constitution, and assign a great many reasons, why they cannot Communicate with us, & yet at the same time will not own that they have made any Separation from us. What middle state now shall we find for these men, who will neither continue in the Church, nor allow themselves to be out of it?

It is possible for two particular Churches to be in Communion with each other, and yet not actually to Communicate together, because distance of place will not permit it; but for two Churches

to

to renounce each others Communion, or at leaſt to withdraw ordinary Communion from each other, from a profeſſed diſlike, and yet ſtill to continue in a ſtate of Communion with one another, is a down-right contradiction. To be in Communion, is to be members of the ſame Body and Society; and he that can prove, and he that can believe two oppoſite Societies, founded upon contrary Principles, and acting by contrary Rules, and purſuing contrary ends, to the Ruine and Subverſion of each other, to be the ſame Body, and the ſame Society, are very wonderful men to me.

3. Thoſe are Separate Churches who do not own each others members, as their own Actual Communion during our reſidence in any certain place, muſt be confined to that particular Church in which we live, if it be a ſound part of the Chriſtian Church; but Church-membership is not confined to any particular Church. I am no otherwiſe a member of any particular Church, than I am of the Univerſal Church, which gives me a right of Membership and Communion in all the particular Churches of the World. Now I would ask whether every Baptized Chriſtian, who by Baptiſm is made a member of the Catholick Church, and has not forfeited this right by a Scandalous life, be *ipſo facto* a member of an Independant Church: if he be not (as it is plain, by the conſtitution of Independency, he is not; for Independent Church-membership is not founded on Baptiſm, but on a particular Church-Covenant;) then Independency is a Separate Communion from the Catholick Church: for the members of the Catholick Church are not by being ſo, made the members of an Independent Church; and therefore an Independent Church is a diſtinct and ſeparate Body from the Catholick Church.

Nay, I would know whether a member of one Independent Church by being ſo, becomes a member of another Independent Church; if he does not, as it is plain he don't (for every Independent Church is founded upon a particular Church-Covenant between ſuch a particular Paſtor and particular members) then every Independent Church is a diſtinct and ſeparate Body from all other Independent Churches; and ſo they are all Schiſmaticks to each other, as not preſerving the unity of the Body.

And though Independent Churches ſhould be ſo civil to each other, as to admit each others members to ſome Acts of Communion, yet this is matter of courteſie, not of right; and therefore

their conſtitution is Schiſmatical. It is like two Neighbour-Families which hold good correſpondence with each other, and often viſit one another, and eat and drink together, but yet remain very diſtinct Families, and have all their concerns apart and ſeparate. But the Chriſtian Church is but one Houſhold and Family; and whoever makes two Families of it, is a Schiſmatick.

Thus let me ask, whether the Epiſcopal and Presbyterian Churches in the ſame Chriſtian Kingdom, be one Church, and members of each other, and own each others members, as ſuch, to be members of their own Body and Church: If they do not, as it is evident they don't, from their holding diſtinct and ſeparate Aſſemblies, under a diſtinct kind and ſpecies of Government, which both of them aſſert to be inſtituted by Chriſt, and to be eſſential to the conſtitution of the Church, from their forming themſelves into diſtinct Bodies, under different Governours, which have no Communion, as ſuch, with each other (which yet is eſſential to the Communion of particular Churches, that their Governours ſhould be in Communion with each other) from their condemning each others conſtitution, and particular modes of Worſhip, and their great endeavours to draw away members from each other; which neceſſarily ſuppoſes, that they do not look upon each others members as their own. I ſay, if from theſe conſiderations it appears, that they are not, and do not think themſelves to be one body, nor members of each other; then they are two ſeparate Churches; and the Church which makes the ſeparation, is the Schiſmatick.

And indeed we may as well ſay, that a Monarchy, and Ariſtocracy, and Democracy in the ſame Nation, with their diſtinct Governours, and diſtinct Subjects, and diſtinct Laws, that are always at Enmity and War with each other, are but one Kingdom, as to aſſert, that the Epiſcopal and Presbyterian Churches in *England*, are but one Church.

3. The laſt thing to be explained, is, what is meant by fixt or conſtant, and by occaſional Communion. Now this is a queſtion which would grievouſly have puzl'd St. *Cyprian* and St. *Auſtin*, and other ancient Fathers, who never heard but of one ſort of Communion. For indeed, there is no place for this diſtinction of conſtant and occaſional Communion, according to the Principles of Catholick Communion. To be in Communion with the Church, is to be a member of the Church; and I take it for granted

granted, that a member ſignifies a fixt and conſtant, not an occaſional member: not a member, which is one day a member, and the next day upon his own voluntary choice, is no member; which is a member or no member, juſt as occaſion ſerves. And if Church-membership be a fixt and conſtant relation in it ſelf conſidered, then the Duties of this relation are fixt and conſtant alſo. And therefore for the underſtanding of theſe terms, which were unknown to Antiquity, we muſt conſult the meaning of our Modern Authors, who were the firſt Inventors of them.

Now by fixt Communion, they mean an actual and conſtant communicating with ſome one particular Church, as fixt members of it. Occaſional Communion is to Pray, and Hear, and receive the Sacrament at ſome other Church, (of which they do not own themſelves to be members) as occaſion ſerves; that is, either to gratifie their own Curioſity, or to ſerve ſome ſecular end, or to avoid the Imputation of Schiſm.

Now this diſtinction is owing to ſuch Principles, as I have evidently proved to be very great miſtakes.

For if to be in Communion with the Church ſignifie to be a member of it; and that not of any particular Church, as diſtinguiſht from the whole Catholick Church, but to be a member of the one Body of Chriſt, and of every ſound part of it; then our Communion with the Church is as fixt as our relation and membership is; and I think no man who underſtands himſelf, will talk of an occaſional member.

If no man can perform any Act of Communion with a Church of which he is no member, (ſince all Acts of Communion have a neceſſary relation to a ſtate of Communion; and that which is an Act of Communion in a member, is no Act of Communion when performed by him who is no member, as I have already proved) then it is as plain a contradiction to talk of an occaſional Act of Communion, as of occaſional membership; and there can be no place for occaſional Communion with a Church of which we are no members, unleſs we will ſay, that a man who is not in Communion, may exerciſe Acts of Communion with the Church.

If all the Acts of Chriſtian Communion, which reſpect Chriſtian Worſhip, ſuch as Prayer, receiving the Lords Supper, *&c.* though performed in a particular Church, be not Acts meerly of a particular Church-Communion, but of Catholick Communion with the whole Chriſtian Church, and every ſound part of it; then

then every true Catholick Christian is not only in a fixt state of Communion with the Catholick Church, but lives in as constant an exercise of Christian Communion with all Sound and Orthodox Churches, as he does with that Church in which he lives: for every Act of Worship, which is an Act of Communion with that particular Church in which it is performed (if that Church be in Catholick Communion) is an Act of Communion with the whole Catholick Church; and therefore the very exercise of Christian Communion, is equally fixt and constant, or equally occasional with the whole Catholick Church.

There is a sence indeed, wherein we may be said to be members of one particular Church considered as distinct from all other particular Churches; but that principally consists in Government and Discipline: Every Christian is a member of the whole Christian Church, and in Communion with it, but he is under the immediate Instruction and Government of his own Bishop and Presbyters, and is bound to Personal Communion with them; and this constitutes a particular Church, in which all Acts of Worship and all Acts of Discipline and Government are under the direction and conduct of a particular Bishop. And when Neighbour-Bishops unite into one Body, and agree upon some common Rules of Government, and the Administration of Religious Offices, this makes them a Patriarchal or National Church; and thus by submitting to the Government and Discipline of such particular or united Bishops, we become members of a Diocesan or National Church, considered as distinct from other Diocesan or National Churches: But this does not confine our Church-membership and Communion to such a particular Church, though it strictly oblige us to conform to the Worship and Discipline and Government of that Church wherein we live, while it imposes nothing on us inconsistent with the Principles of Catholick Communion.

But though particular Christians are more peculiarly obliged to observe the Rites and Usages, and to submit to the Government and Discipline of the Church wherein they live, and to maintain Personal Communion with it, (and upon this account may in a peculiar manner be called the members of that Church) yet every Act of Communion performed in this particular Church, is an Act of Catholick Communion, and an exercise of Christian Communion with the whole Church, and every sound part of it. Baptism makes us members of the whole Church, and gives

us a right to Communion with every ſound part of it: every Act of Chriſtian Communion in a particular Church, is a virtual Communion with the whole Church, with all particular Churches, which live in Communion with each other; and notwithſtanding my relation to a particular Church, by my conſtant abode and habitation in it, when ever I travel into any other Church, I Communicate with them as a member; ſo that where-ever I Communicate, whether in that Church in which I uſually live, or in any other particular Church, where I am accidentally preſent, my Communion is of the ſame nature; that is, I Communicate as a member of the Church: and it is impoſſible I ſhould Communicate otherwiſe; for I have no right to Communion but as a member; and nothing I can do, can be an Act of Communion, if I be not and do not own my ſelf to be a member.

And yet this is the occaſion of this miſtake about Fixt and Occaſional Communion; that according to the Laws of our Church, which are founded on great and wiſe reaſons, and indeed according to the Laws of Catholick Communion, every Chriſtian is bound to Communicate with that part of the Church wherein he lives: now men may have houſes in different Pariſhes, or diſtinct Dioceſes, or may travel into other parts of the Country, and Communicate with the Churches which they find in thoſe places where they are; or they may ſometimes go to prayers, or hear a Sermon, or receive the Lords Supper at another Pariſh-Church. Now our ordinary Communion with thoſe Churches where our conſtant abode is, may be called conſtant Communion; and our Communion with thoſe Churches which we accidentally viſit, and Communicate with, may be called occaſional Communion; and all this without Schiſm, becauſe we ſtill Communicate either with the ſame National Church, or (which is often the caſe of Travellers) with ſome other ſound part of the Catholick Church, of which we are alſo members, and ſo ſtill keep in the ſame Communion, and Communicate with no Churches but thoſe of which we own our ſelves members; as being all in the ſame Communion, as being either ſincere members of the National or Catholick Church.

From hence our Diſſenters conclude, that their Communion with an Independant or Presbyterian Church of which they profeſs themſelves fixt members, is as conſiſtent with their occaſional Communion with the Church of *England*, when to ſerve ſome pre-

preſent turn, they hear the Prayers and receive the Sacraments with us, as our fixt Communion with our Pariſh-Churches is with our occaſional Communion with our Pariſh-Churches; which no body accounts Schiſm, though when it is too frequent and cauſeleſs, it is a great diſorder.

But the difference between theſe two is vaſtly great: for in the Firſt Caſe, we onely Communicate with ſuch Churches which are all in Communion with each other; and therefore he who is a member of one, is a member of them all, and Communicates with them where-ever he is, as a member. But he who is a fixt member of a Presbyterian or Independent Church, cannot Communicate ſo much as occaſionally with the Church of *England*, as a member, becauſe he is a member not onely of another particular, but of a ſeparate Church; and it is impoſſible for any man who is one with himſelf, to be a member of two ſeparate Churches; and whatever Acts of Worſhip we joyn in with other Churches of which we are no members, they are not properly Acts of Communion.

Having thus premiſed the explication of theſe terms, what is meant by *Church*, and what is meant by *Church-Communion*, and what is meant by *Fixt or Conſtant*, and *occaſional Communion*; the right underſtanding of theſe things, will make it very eaſie to reſolve thoſe caſes which immediately reſpect Church-Communion: and I ſhall inſtance in theſe three.

1. Whether Communion with ſome Church or other, eſpecially when the Church is divided into ſo many Sects and Parties, be a neceſſary Duty incumbent on all Chriſtians.

2 Whether conſtant Communion with that Church, with which occaſional Communion is Lawful, be a neceſſary Duty.

3. Whether it be Lawful for the ſame perſon to Communicate with two ſeparate Churches.

Caſe 1. *Caſe* 1. Whether Communion with ſome Church or other, eſpecially when the Church is divided into ſo many Sects and Parties, be a neceſſary Duty incumbent on all Chriſtians.

Now methinks the reſolution of this is as plain, as whether it be neceſſary for every man to be a Chriſtian. For every Chriſtian is Baptized into the Communoin of the Church, and muſt continue a member of the Church till he renounce his Membership by Schiſm or Infidelity, or be caſt out of the Church by Eccleſiaſtical cenſures.

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Baptism incorporates us into the Christian Church, that is, makes us Members of the Body of Christ, which is his Church, and is frequently so called in Scripture. For there is but *one Body and one Spirit*, Eph. 4. 4. one Christian Church, which is animated and governed by the one Spirit of Christ. And we are all Baptized into this one Body. *For as the Body is one, and hath many Members, and all the Members of that one Body, being many, are one Body; so also is Christ*, that is, the Christian Church, which is the Body of Christ, of which he is the Head; *for by one Spirit we are all Baptized into one Body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be Bond or Free, and are all made to drink into one Spirit; for the Body is not one Member, but many.* Eph. 5. 29. 4. 12. Col 1. 18. 1 Cor. 12. 12, 13.

Now I have already proved that Church-Communion is nothing else but Church-Membership; to be in Communion with the Church, and to be a Member of the Church, signifying the same thing. And I think, I need not prove, that to be in a state of Communion, contains both a right and an obligation to actual Communion. He who is a Member of the Church, may challenge all the Priviledges of a member, among which actual Communion is none of the least; to be admitted to all the Acts and Offices of Christian Communion, to the Communion of Prayers and Sacraments, and all other Christian Duties, which no man who is not a Member of the Church, has any right to. And he who is a Member, is bound to perform all those Duties and Offices which are Essential to Church-Communion, and therefore is bound to Communicate with the Church in Religious Assemblies, to joyn in Prayers and Sacraments, to attend publick Instructions, and to live like a Member of the Church.

But to put this past all doubt, *that external and actual Communion is an essential Duty of a Church-Member*, I shall offer these plain proofs of it.

1. That Baptism makes us Members of the visible Church of Christ: but there can be no visible Church without visible Communion, and therefore every visible Member, by vertue of his Membership, is bound to external and visible Communion, when it may be had.

2. This is essential to the notion of a Church, as it is a Body and Society of Christians. For all Bodies and Societies of men are instituted for the sake of some common Duties and Offices to be performed by the Members of it. A Body of Men is a Com-

munity; and it is a ſtrange kind of Community, in which every Member may act by it ſelf, without any Communication with other Members of the ſame Body. And yet ſuch a kind of Body as this, the Chriſtian Church is, if it be not an eſſenial Duty of every Member to live in the exerciſe of viſible Communion with the Church, when he can. For there is the ſame Law for all Members, and either all or none are bound to actual Communion.

But this is more abſurd ſtill, when we conſider, that the Church is ſuch a Body as conſiſts of variety of Members, of different Offices and Officers, which are of no uſe without actual and viſible Communion of all its Members.

To what purpoſe did Chriſt appoint ſuch variety of Miniſters in his Church, *Apoſtles, Prophets, Evangeliſts, Paſtors and Teachers, for the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the Miniſtry, for the Edifying of the Body of Chriſt?* to what purpoſe has he inſtituted a ſtanding Miniſtry in his Church, to offer up the Prayers of the faithful to God, to inſtruct, exhort, reprove, and adminiſter the Chriſtian Sacraments, if private Chriſtians are not bound to maintain Communion with them in all Religious Offices?

Eph. 4. 11. 12.

3. Nay, the Nature of Chriſtian Worſhip obliges us to Church-communion. I ſuppoſe, no man will deny but that every Chriſtian is bound to Worſhip God according to our Saviours Inſtitution: and what that is, we cannot learn better than from the Example of the Primitive Chriſtians; of whom St. *Luke* gives us this account, that *they continued Stedfaſt in the Apoſtles Doctrine and Worſhip, and in breaking of Bread, and in Prayer.*

Acts 2. 41.

That which makes any thing in a ſtrict ſence an Act of Church-communion is, that it is performed in the Fellowſhip of the Apoſtles, or in Communion with the Biſhops and Miniſters of the Church. They are appointed to Offer up the Prayers of Chriſtians to God in his Name; and therefore though the private Devotions of Chriſtians are acceptable to God, as the Prayers of Church-Members, yet none but publick Prayers which are Offered up by men who have their Authority from Chriſt to Offer theſe Spiritual Sacrifices to God, are properly the Prayers of the Church, and Acts of Church-communion. If then we muſt Offer up our Prayers to God according to Chriſt's Inſtitution, that is, by the hands of perſons Authorized and ſet apart for that purpoſe, we muſt of neceſſity joyn in the actual and viſible Communion of the Church.

The

The Sacrament of the Lords Supper is the principal part of Christian Worship; and we cannot celebrate this Feast, but in Church-Communion; for this is a *συνοδικὸν* a common Supper, or Communion-Feast, which in all Ages of the Church has been administred by consecrated Persons, and in Church-communion; for it loses its Nature and Signification, when it is turned into a private Mass; so that if every Christian is bound to the actual performance of true Christian Worship, he is bound to an actual Communion with the Christian Church.

4. We may observe farther, that Church-Authority is exercised onely about Church-Communion, which necessarily supposes, that all Christians who are Church-members and in a state of Communion, are bound to all the Acts of external and visible Communion with the Church. The exercise of Church-Authority consists in Receiving in, or Shutting out of the Church. To receive into the Church, is to admit them to all external Acts of Communion: to shut, or cast out of the Church, is to deny them the external and visible Communion of the Church; not to allow them to Pray, or receive the Lords Supper, or perform any Religious Offices in the publick Assemblies of the Church. Now all this Church-Authority would signifie nothing, were not External and Actual Communion both the Priviledge and Duty of every Christian; and yet this is all the Authority Christ hath given to His Church.

5. And to confirm all this, nothing is more plain in Scripture, than that Separation from a Church, is to withdraw from the visible Communion of it; and there can be no Notion of Separation without this. Now if Separation from Religious Assemblies be to break Communion, then to live in Communion with the Church requires our actual Communicating with the Church in all Religious Duties.

And that this is the true Notion of Separation, is easily proved from the most express testimonies, 2 *Cor.* 6. 17. *Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you:* Where, *come out from among them, and be ye separate*, plainly signifies, to forsake the Assemblies of Idolaters, not to Communicate with them in their Idolatrous Worship. So that not to joyn with any Men or Church in their Idolatrous Worship, is to Separate from their Communion; which is a very Godly Separation, when the Worship is Idola-

trous and Sinful; but a Schismatical Separation, when it is not.

1 John 2. 19. Thus St. *John* tells us of the Ancient Hereticks, *They went out from us, because they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.* Where their going out from them, plainly signifies their forsaking Christian Assemblies; upon which account the Author of the Epistle to the *Hebrews* admonishes the Christians, *not to forsake the Assembling of themselves together, as the manner of some is*; in which he refers to the Separation of those Ancient Hereticks.

Heb. 10. 25.

And thus accordingly, to have Fellowship or Communion with any, is to partake with them in their Religious Mysteries. By this Argument St. *Paul* dissuades the *Corinthians* from Eating of the Idols Feasts, because they were Sacrifices to Evil Spirits, and by partaking of those Sacrifices they had Communion with them.

1 Cor. 10. 20, 21. *But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to Devils, and not to God; and I would not that you should have Fellowship with Devils. Ye cannot drink the Cup of the Lord, and the Cup of Devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lords Table, and of the Table of Devils.* So that though we must first be in a state of Communion with Christ and his Church, must first be received into Covenant, and by Baptism be incorporated into the Christian Church, before we have any right to Communicate with this Church; yet no man can preserve his Church-state without Actual Communion; no man has Communion with Christ or his Church, but he who Actually Communicates in all Religious Offices, and Christian Institutions. A state of Communion confers a right to Communicate, but Actual Communion consists in the exercise of Communion; and a right to Communicate without Actual Communion, is worth nothing, as no right or priviledge is without the Exercise of it; for enjoyment consists in Acts, and all the Blessings of the Gospel, all the Blessings of Christian Communion, are conveyed to us by Actual Communion. So that if we would partake of the Blessings of Christ, if we would reap the Advantages of Church-Communion, we must live in Actual Communion, and not content our selves with a dormant and useless right, which we never bring into Act.

This is sufficient to prove the necessity of Actual Communion with the Christian Church, when it may be had; for where it cannot be had, Non-communion is no sin, for we are not obliged to Im-

Impossibilities: He who lives in a Country, or Travels through any Country where there is no true Christian Church to Communicate with, cannot enjoy Actual Communion; the right and duty of Communion continues, though necessity may suspend the Act. But the greater difficulty is, whether it be not lawful to suspend our Communion with any particular Churches, when we see the Church divided into a great many Parties and Factions, which refuse Communion with each other; which is the deplorable state of the Church at this day among us: Presbyterians, Independents, Anabaptists, Quakers, all Separate from the Church of *England*, and from each other; and from hence some conclude it lawful to suspend Communion with all the divided Parties; which is just such a reason for a total suspension of Church-Communion, as the different and contrary opinions in Religion are for Scepticism and Infidelity. Because there are a great many kinds of Religions in the World, and a great many divided Sects of the Christian Religion, therefore some men will be of no Religion; and because the Christian Church is divided into a great many opposite and separate Communions, therefore others will be of no Church; and the reason is as strong in one case, as it is in the other, that is, indeed, it holds in neither: For it is possible to discover which is the true Religion, notwithstanding all these different and contrary perswasions about it; and it is equally possible to find out which of these divided Communions is a true and sound Member of the Catholick Church, and when we know that, we are bound to maintain Communion with it.

Indeed if such Divisions and Separations excuse us from actual Communion with the Church, actual Communion never was, and is never likely to be a Duty long together; for there never was any state of the Church so happy long together, as to be without Divisions; even in the Apostles times, there were those who separated from the Communion of the Apostles, and set up private Conventicles of their own; and so it has been in all succeeding Ages of the Church, and so it is likely to continue; and if we are not bound to communicate with the Church while there are any Hereticks or Schismaticks who divide from the Church, farewel to all Church-communion in this World.

Should any man indeed travel into a strange Country, and there find a Schism in the Christian Church, it were very fitting for him to suspend Communion with either Party, till he had opportunity

tunity to acquaint himself with the state of the Controversie, so as to judge which Party is the Schismatick; and then he is bound (if he understand their Language) to communicate with the sound and Orthodox part of the Catholick Church, which he finds in that place. But this does not reach the Case of those, who are constant Inhabitants of the place where the Schism is; for they must not live in a Sceptical suspension of Communion all their days.

And there is one plain Rule to direct all men in this Inquiry: That where-ever there is a Church Establisht by publick Authority, if there be nothing Sinful in its Constitution and Worship, we are bound to communicate with that Church, and to reject the Communion of all other Parties and Sects of Christians. For the advantage always lies on the side of Authority: no publick Establishment can justifie a Sinful Communion; but if there be nothing Sinful in the Communion of the National Church, which is Establisht by publick Authority, to separate from such a Church is both disobedience to the Supreme Authority in the State, and a Schism from the Church.

But it will be convenient to consider, what these men mean by suspending Communion. For is it Lawful for an *English* man during these Church-Divisions among us, never to Worship God in any publick Religious Assemblies? Never to Pray, nor Hear, nor receive the Lords Supper together? If this were so, it were the most Effectual way in the World to thrust out all Religion.

But this they will not, they dare not say; and therefore by suspending Communion they mean, that in case of such divisions they may refuse to enter themselves fixt and setled Members of any Church, but communicate occasionally with them all.

But I have already observed how absurd this distinction of fixt and occasional Communion is. For no Act of Religion is an Act of Communion (not so much as of occasional Communion) which is not performed in the Communion of the Church; and no man is in Communion with the Church, who is not a Member of it; and whoever is a Member of the Church, is a fixt and not an occasional Member; and whatever Church he communicates with, though it may be it is but once in a Year, or once in his Life, as he occasionally travels that way, yet he communicates as a fixt Member of the Catholick Church, and of every sound part of the Catholick

Catholick Church: for a fixt Member does not signifie our fixt abode, or constant Acts of Communion in any particular Church, but our state of Communion, and fixt and permanent Relation to the whole Christian Church, and every part of it; and therefore though a particular Act of Communion may be performed upon some particular occasion with such a particular Church, yet it is not an Act of occasional but of fixt Communion; because though I communicate but once, and that occasionally, yet I communicate as a Member of the Church, which is not an occasional but a fixt Relation.

So that when men communicate occasionally, as they speak, with all the different Parties of Christians in a divided Church, they either communicate with none, or communicate with all of them. If they perform these Acts of Communion without owning their Relation to them as Members, then they are in Communion with none of them, notwithstanding all these pretended Acts of occasional Communion; and so they live in Communion with no Church, which yet I hope I have made it appear to be the Duty of every Christian to do: If they communicate with all these divided Parties as Members, then they are in Communion with many separate Churches, are Members of Separate and Opposite Bodies, that is, they are contrary to themselves, and on one side or other, are certain to be Schismaticks. But this will appear further, from considering the two following Cases.

Case 2. The Second Case is this: *Whether constant Communion be a Duty, where occasional Communion is Lawful.* I have already made it appear, that the very Notion of Constant and Occasional Communion is absurd, and a Contradiction to all the Principles of Catholick Communion; and therefore there is no place for this Distinction, nor for this Question; every Christian, as a Christian, is a fixt Member of the whole Christian Church, and of every sound part of it; and for men to talk of being Members of any one particular Church, in distinction from all other particular Churches, of which they will not own themselves Members, is a Schismatical Notion of Church-Membership, because it divides the Christian Church into distinct Memberships, and therefore into distinct Bodies, which makes the one Church and one Body of Christ not one, but many Bodies: for if every particular Church has such a number of Members, which are Members onely of that particular Church wherein they are fixt, and are not Members

Case 2.

Members of any other particular Church; then every particular Church is a distinct and entire Body by it self, which has particular Members of its own, which belong to no other Body; just as every particular man has his own body, which consists of such a number of members united to each other, and distinct from all other bodies.

The plain state of the Case in short is this: Every true Christian is in Communion with the whole Christian Church, that is, is a Member of the whole Church, but he must perform the Acts of Communion in some particular Church: and the onely allowable difference between Constant and Occasional Communion is this: That we must perform the constant Acts of Communion in that part of the Catholick Church in which we constantly live, and Communicate occasionally with that part of the Church in which we are occasionally present; and therefore there never can be any competition between Constant and Occasional Communion in the same place. I cannot Communicate constantly with that Church in which I Communicate occasionally, unless I remove my habitation, and turn an occasional presence into a constant and setled abode; nor can I without sin Communicate onely occasionally with that Church with which I may and ought to Communicate constantly, as being constantly present there; for this is onely to do that sometimes, which I ought to do always. This is like a mans living occasionally in his own House, which signifies that for the most part he is a Stranger at home.

There cannot be two distinct Churches in the same place, one for Occasional, and another for Constant Communion, without Schism: For it is evident these are two distinct Communions, and that our Relation to them is as different as it is to a House we live in, and to an Inn, where we lodge for a Night.

So that there is no foundation for this Inquiry among men who understand the true Principles of Catholick Communion; It never can be a Case of Conscience, whether I should Communicate constantly or occasionally with such a Church, unless it be a Case of Conscience, whether I should live constantly or occasionally within the bounds and jurisdiction of such a Church; for where my constant abode is, there my constant Communion must be, if there be a true and sincere part of the Catholick Church in that place; and where I am onely occasionally, there I can onely Communicate occasionally also.

But

But to meet with the diſtempers of this Age, and to remove thoſe Apologies ſome men make for their Schiſm, it is neceſſary to make this a Queſtion. For in this divided ſtate of the Church, there are a great many among us, who think they cannot maintain conſtant Communion with the Church of *England*, as conſtant and fixt Members, who yet upon ſome occaſions think they may Communicate with us in all parts of Worſhip, and actually do ſo.

Now when theſe men who are fixt Members, as they call it, of ſeparate Churches, think fit ſometimes to Communicate in all parts of Worſhip with the Church of *England*, we charitably ſuppoſe that men who pretend to ſo much tenderneſs of Conſcience, and care of their Souls, will do nothing, not ſo much as once, which they believe or ſuſpect to be ſinful, at the time when they do it; and therefore we conclude that thoſe, who Communicate occaſionally with the Church of *England*, do thereby declare, that they believe there is nothing ſinful in our Communion; and we thank them for this good opinion they expreſs of our Church, and earneſtly deſire to know how they can juſtifie their ordinary Separation from ſuch a Church as requires no ſinful terms of Communion.

If any thing leſs than ſinful terms of Communion can juſtifie a Separation, then there can be no end of Separations, and Catholick Communion is an Impoſſible and Impracticable Notion; that is, the Church of Chriſt neither is one Body, nor ever can be. For if men are not bound to Communicate with a Church which obſerves our Saviours Inſtitutions, without any ſuch corrupt mixtures as make its Communion ſinful; then there is no bounds to be ſet to the Fancies of men, but they may new model Churches, and divide and ſubdivide without any end.

Is that a ſound and Orthodox part of the Catholick Church, which has nothing ſinful in its Communion? If it be not, Pray what is it that makes any Church Sound and Orthodox? If it be, upon what account is it Lawful to Separate from a Sound and Orthodox Church? And may we not by the ſame reaſon Separate from the whole Catholick Church, as from any Sound part of it? Nay, does not that man Separate from the whole Catholick Church, who Separates from any Sound part of it? For the Communion of the Church is but one, and he that divides and breaks this Union, Separates himſelf from the whole Body.

Excepting the Independency of Churches (which I have proved above to be Schism in the very notion of it) the great Pleas for Separation from a Church which has nothing sinful in its Communion, are the pretence of greater Edification and purer Ordinances. But these are such Pleas, as must expose the Church to eternal Schisms, because there are no certain Rules to judge of these matters, but the various and uncertain fancies of men. What they like best, that shall be most for their Edification, and these shall be purer Ordinances; and till men can agree these matters among themselves, which they are never likely to do, till they can all agree in the same Diet, or in their judgment and opinion about beauty, decency, fitness, convenience, they may and will divide without end. And if the Peace and Unity of the Church be so necessary a Duty, it is certain, these Principles which are so destructive to Peace and Unity must be false: as, to consider those things particularly, but very briefly;

What purer Administrations and Ordinances would men have, than those of our Saviours own Institution, without any corrupt and sinful mixtures to spoil their vertue and efficacy? (as we suppose is acknowledged by those, who occasionally Communicate in all parts of our Worship, that there is nothing sinful in it.) The purity of divine Administrations must consist in their agreement with the Institution, that there is neither any such defect or addition as alters their Nature and destroys their Vertue. For the Efficacy of Gospel-Ordinances depends upon their Institution, not upon particular modes of Administration which are not expressly commanded in the Gospel; and he who desires greater purity of Ordinances than their conformity to their Institution, who thinks that Baptism and the Lords Supper lose their Efficacy unless they be administred in that way which they themselves best like, are guilty of gross Superstition, and attribute the vertue of Sacraments to the manner of their administration, not to their Divine Institution.

And what men talk of greater Edification, is generally as little understood as the other: for Edification is building up, and is applied to the Church, considered as Gods House and Temple; and it is an odd way of building up the Temple of God, by dividing and separating the parts of it from each other.

This one thing well considered, *viz.* That Edification or Building, according to the Scripture-notion of it, does always primarily

primarily refer to, or at leaſt include Church unity and Communion, is ſufficient to convince any man, what an ill way it is, to ſeek for greater Edification in breaking the Communion of the Church by Schiſm and Separation; and therefore I ſhall make it plainly appear, that this is the true Scripture-notion of Edification; and to that end ſhall conſider the moſt material places where this word is uſed.

Now the moſt proper ſignification of οἰκοδομὴ, which our Tranſlators render by *Edification*, is a Houſe or Building; and this is the proper ſence wherein it belongs to the Chriſtian Church, *Ye are Gods Husbandry, ye are Gods Building*, that is, the Church is Gods Houſe or Building, οἰκοδομὴ. Thus the ſame Apoſtle tells us, that in Chriſt, *the whole Building* (*i. e.* the whole Chriſtian Church) *fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy Temple in the Lord.* Hence the Governours of the Church are called Builders, οἰκοδομοῦντες, and the Apoſtles are called *Labourers together with God*, in erecting this Spiritual Building, and St. *Paul* calls himſelf a *Maſter-Builder.* Hence the increaſe growth and advances towards perfection in the Church, is called the Building, or Edification of it. For this reaſon St. *Paul* commends Propheſie, or Expounding the Scriptures, before ſpeaking in unknown Tongues without an Interpreter, becauſe by this the Church receives Building or Edification. All theſe Spiritual gifts, which were beſtowed on the Chriſtians, were for the Building and Edifying of the Church. The Apoſtolical power in Church-cenſures was for *Edification, not for Deſtruction*, εἰς οἰκοδομὴν καὶ οὐκ εἰς καθαίρεσιν to Build, and not to pull down; that is, to preſerve the Unity of the Church intire, and its Communion pure.

1 Cor. 3. 9. Eph. 2. 21. Matth. 21. 42. Acts 4. 11. 1 Cor. 3. 9, 10. 1 Cor. 14. 5. v. 12. 2 Cor. 10. 8. 12. 19. 13. 10.

And we may obſerve, that this Edification is primarily applied to the Church, *That the Church may receive Edifying: That ye may excel to the Edifying of the Church: For the Edifying of the Body of Chriſt.* And it is very obſervable wherein the Apoſtle places the Edification of the Body of Chriſt, *viz.* in Unity and Love. *Till we all come in the Unity of the Faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect Man, unto the meaſure of the Stature of the fulneſs of Chriſt.* Till we are United by one Faith into one Body, and perfect Man. *And ſpeaking the truth in love, may grow up in him into all things, which is the head, Even Chriſt, from whom the whole Body fitly joyned together, and compacted by that which every joynt ſupplieth, according to the Effectual working in the*

1 Cor. 14. 5. 12. Eph. 4. 12. 13. 15, 16.

measure of every part, maketh increase of the Body, unto the Edifying it self in Love. This is an admirable description of the Unity of the Church, in which all the parts are closely united and compacted together, as Stones and Timber are to make one House; and thus they grow into one Body, and increase in mutual Love and Charity, which is the very Building and Edification of the Church, which is Edifyed and Built up in love, as the Apostle
1 Cor. 8. 1. adds, *that knowledge puffeth up, but charity Edifieth*; this builds up the Church of Christ; and that not such a common charity as we have for all mankind, but such a love and sympathy as is peculiar to the Members of the same Body, and which none but Members can have for each other. And now methinks I need not prove that Schism and Separation is not for the Edification of the Church; to Separate for Edification, is to Pull down in stead of building up.

But these men do not seem to have any great regard to the Edification of the Church, but onely to their own particular Edification: and we must grant, that Edification is sometimes applied to particular Christians in Scripture, according to St. *Pauls*
1 Thes. 5. 11. Exhortation, *Comfort your selves together, and edifie one another, even as also ye do.* And this Edifying one another without question signifies our promoting each others growth and progress in all Christian Graces and Vertues: and so the building and edification of the Church, signifies the growth and improvement of the Church in all Spiritual wisdom and knowledge, and Christian graces: the Edification of the Church consists in the Edification of particular Christians; but then this is called Edification or Building, because this growth & improvement is in the Unity and Communion of the Church, and makes them one Spiritual House and Temple. Thus the Church is called the Temple of God, and every particular Christian is Gods Temple, wherein the Holy Spirit dwells; and yet God has but one Temple, and the Holy Spirit dwells onely in the Church of Christ: but particular Christians are Gods Temple, and the Holy Spirit dwells in them, as living Members of the Christian Church; and thus by the same reason the Church is Edified and Built up, as it grows into a Spiritual House and Holy Temple, by a firm and close Union and Communion of all its parts; and every Christian is Edified, as he grows up in all Christian Graces and Vertues in the Unity of the Church.

And therefore whatever extraordinary means of Edification men

men may fancy to themſelves in a Separation, the Apoſtle knew no Edification, but in the Communion of the Church: and indeed, if our growth and increaſe in all Grace and Vertue, be more owing to the internal aſſiſtance of the Divine Spirit, than to the external Adminiſtrations, as St. *Paul* tells us, *I have planted, and* Apollos *watered, but God gave the increaſe: So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, nor he that watereth, but God that gave the increaſe:* And the Divine Spirit confines his influences and operations to the Unity of the Church (as the ſame Apoſtle tells us, that there is but *one Body and one Spirit*; which plainly ſignifies, that the operations of this one Spirit, are appropriated to this one Body, as the Soul is to the Body it Animates) then it does not ſeem a very likely way for Edification, to cut our ſelves off from the Unity of Chriſts Body. 1 Cor. 3. 6, 7. Eph. 4. 4.

3. The Third and Laſt Caſe ſtill remains, which will be reſolved in a few words, according to the Principles now laid down, which is this: *Whether it be Lawful to Communicate with two diſtinct and ſeparate Churches.* For this is thought of late days, not onely a very Innocent and Lawful thing, but the true Catholick Spirit, and Catholick Communion, to Communicate with Churches of all Communions, unleſs perhaps they may except the Papiſts and Quakers. It is thought a Schiſmatical Principle, to refuſe to Communicate with thoſe Churches which withdraw Communion from us. And thus ſome, who Communicate ordinarily with the Church of *England*, make no Scruple to Communicate in Prayers and Sacraments with Presbyterian and Independent Churches; and Presbyterians can Communicate with the Church of *England*, and with Independents, whom formerly they charged with down-right Schiſm; and ſome think it very indifferent whom they Communicate with, and therefore take their turns in all. But this is as contrary to all the Principles of Church-Communion, as any thing can poſſibly be. Caſe 3.

To be in Communion with the Church, is to be a Member of it; and to be a Member of two ſeparate and oppoſite Churches, is to be as contrary to our ſelves, as thoſe ſeparate Churches are to each other.

Chriſt hath but one Church, and one Body, and therefore where there are two Churches divided from each other by ſeparate Communions, there is a Schiſm and Rent in the Body; and whoever Communicates with both theſe Churches, on one ſide or other, communicates in a Schiſm.

That

That the Presbyterian and Independent Churches have made an Actual Separation from the Church of *England*, I have evidently proved already; and therefore if the Communion of the Church of *England* be Lawful (as those who can and ordinarily do Communicate with the Church of *England* must be presumed to acknowledge) then they are Schismatichs; and to Communicate with them, is to partake in their Schism.

Now if Schism be an Innocent thing, and the true Catholick Spirit, I have no more to say, but that the whole Christian Church, ever since the Apostles times, has been in a very great mistake: but if Schism be a very great sin, and that which will Damn us as soon as Adultery and Murder, then it must needs be a dangerous thing to Communicate with Schismaticks.

The sum of all in short is this: Besides these men, who justifie their Separation from the Church of *England*, by charging Her with requiring sinful terms of Communion, (which is the onely thing that can justifie their Separation, if it could be proved) there are others, who separate lightly and wantonly, for want of a due sence of the Nature of Church-Communion, and our obligations to preserve the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace. They have no notion at all of a Church, or no notion of one Church, or know not wherein the Unity and Communion of this Church consists; and these men think it is indifferent, whether they Communicate with any Church at all, or that they secure themselves from Schism by Communicating sometimes with one Church, and sometimes with another; that they may choose their Church according to their own fancies, and change again when ever their humor alters. But I hope, who ever considers carefully what I have now writ, and attends to those passionate Exhortations of the Gospel to Peace, and Unity, and Brotherly Love, which cannot be preserved but in one Communion, which is the Unity of the Body of Christ, and the Peace and Love of fellow-Members, will not onely heartily Pray to the God of Peace, to restore Peace and Unity to his Church, but be careful how he divides the Church himself, and will use his utmost endeavers to heal the present Schisms and Divisions of the Church of Christ.

THE END.